

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2121

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

USMISSION GENEVA

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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KUALA LUMPUR 0902

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, MY

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: UNHCR MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR
OF REPRESENTATIVES OF COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION

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1. SUMMARY. THE UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN KUALA LUMPUR
HELD A MEETING ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES JANUARY 31. HE
URGED LARGER QUOTAS FOR THEIR RESETTLEMENT ABROAD. OF
THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THIRTEEN EMBASSYIES AND COMMISSIONS
FROM COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION AT THE MEETING,
ALL SPOKE OUT ON THEIR PROGRAM EXCEPT THE AUSTRALIANS, GERMAN,

THE BRITISH, AND THE DANES. THE AUSTRALIANS, CANADIANS, AND FRENCH ASSURED US PRIVATELY THAT THE U.S., DESPITE ITS NEW 7000 QUOTA, WOULD NOT HAVE TO BEAR THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BURDEN ON MALAYSIA. THE MEETING, WHILE MODEST IN SCALE, SERVED THE PURPOSE OF LOCAL COORDINATION AND POSSIBLE STIMULUS TO INCREASED QUOTAS FOR REFUGEES. THE UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN BANGKOK MIGHT USEFULLY HOLD A SIMILAR ONE. END SUMMARY.

2. R. SAMPATKUMAR, REGIONAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE FOR EASTERN SOUTH ASIA, HELD ON JANUARY 31 THE THIRD MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR OF REPRESENTATIVES OF COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION. PREVIOUS MEETINGS TOOK PLACE IN JANUARY AND JUNE OF 1977. THE OBJECTIVE, IN THE LIGHT OF INCREASING NUMBERS OF INDOCHINESE BOAT CASE ARRIVALS IN MALAYSIA AND A TOTAL OF OVER 3000 ON HAND WITHOUT RESETTLEMENT GUARANTEES FROM ABROAD, WAS TO REVIEW CURRENT PROGRAMS OF COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION AND STIMULATE FURTHER ACCEPTANCES. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMBASSIES AND COMMISSIONS OF THIRTEEN COUNTRIES ATTENDED THE MEETING.

3. SAMPATKUMAR MENTIONED THAT SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING, SIX COUNTRIES HAD ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FOR ACCEPTING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM MALAYSIA: THEY ARE AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, CANADA, DENMARK, NEW ZEALAND AND THE NETHERLANDS. IN ADDITION, FRANCE, THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF
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GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND WERE CONTINUING TO ACCEPT REFUGEES. THE U.S. AND AUSTRALIA WERE TAKING LARGE NUMBERS.

4. SAMPATKUMAR DESCRIBED THE UNHCR BUDGET FOR CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF REFUGEES, AND FOR THEIR INLAND TRANSPORTATION. THE FIGURES WERE \$114,800 THROUGH THE END OF 1976; \$595,000 IN 1977; AND AN INITIAL BUDGET FOR 1978 OF \$250,000.

5. SAMPATKUMAR DESCRIBED THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT PLAN OF REDUCING TMA SIX CAMPS IN WESTERN MALAYSIA TO TWO ISLAND LOCATIONS. PULAU BESAR CURRENTLY HAS 2300 REFUGEES, AND PULAU TENGAH LESS THAN 900. THERE WERE PLANS TO STRENGTHEN THE UNHCR SUB-OFFICE IN KUANTE, PAHANG TO IMPROVE UNHCR COVERAGE OF THESE CAMPS. THE UNHCR ALSO INTENDED TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF DOCUMENTATION AT ITS KUALA LUMPUR HEADQUARTERS SO THAT COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION WOULD HAVE QUICK AND MORE COMPLETE REFERENCE TO AVAILABLE REFUGEES.

6. THE RATE OF ARRIVALS AND THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES

ON HAND HOWEVER, MADE THE PICTURE BLEAK. AT THE END OF 1977 THERE WERE OVER 2000 REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA WITHOUT RESETTLEMENT OFFERS. OVER 1000 MORE HAD ARRIVED IN JANUARY, A STARTLING FIGURE SINCE THE MONSOONS WERE CONTINUING THROUGHOUT THE MONTH. WITH THE MONSOONS ABOUT TO END, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE THE FUTURE ARRIVAL RATE IN MALAYSIA. THE STATEMENTS OF MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE WILLINGNESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ADMIT REFUGEES. THE LARGE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN JANUARY INDICATED CONTINUED MALAYSIAN WILLINGNESS TO DO SO. HE APPEALED TO THOSE PRESENT TO MATCH MALAYSIAN GENEROSITY WITH INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESETTLEMENT ABROAD.

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7. SAMPATKUMAR NOTED THATAT HE HAD HAD OCCASION IN DECEMBER TO VISIT THE FIFTY-TWO REFUGEES WHO HAD ARRIVED TWO MONTHS BEFORE IN DEMARK. HE SAID THEY HAD ALREADY LEARNED THE LANGUAGE, AND THE DANES SAID THA THE VIETNAMESE WERE THE EASIEST OF ALL REFUGEE GROUPS THAT HAD BEEN RESETTLED IN DENMARK. THE DANES CITED THE CHILEANS ANDUGANDA ASIANS IN COMPARISON.

8. SAMPATKUMAR OPENED THE FLOOR TO COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS. THE SWISS REPRESENTATIVE SAID THAT THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER, ON BEHALF OF ALL ASEAN COUNTRIES, HAD WRITTEN A LETTER TO MR. HARTLING, THE NEW UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. THE LETTER ASKED THAT ALL INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN ASEAN COUNTRIES BE RESETTLED ELSEWHERE. THE

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SWISS REPRESENTATIVE THEN OUTLINED HIS COUNTRY'S
PROGRAM. SWITZERLAND HAD ADMITTED 110 REFUGEES
FROM VIETNAM IN 1977. THEY ENTERED SWITZERLAND IN

GROUPS OF ABOUT 35 EACH AT THE END OF MARCH, JULY, AND NOVEMBER. THEY WERE FIRST CONCENTRATED IN A HOME IN EAST SWITZERLAND IN ORDER TO PREPARE THEM FOR ENTRY INTO SWISS SOCIETY. THE SWISS PLAN TO ACCEPT ANOTHER 35 FROM TEMPORARY ASYLUM IN THAILAND AT THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY, AND TWO MORE GROUPS IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1978 OF ABOUT 35 PERSONS EACH. THE SWISS FORESEE ACCEPTING REFUGEES IN FUTURE GROUPS OF 35 EVERY FEW MONTHS AFTER NEXT SUMMER.

9. ONE OF THE AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVES WELCOMED THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED UNHCR PRESENCE IN WESTERN MALAYSIA WHERE UNHCR COVERAGE WAS CLEARLY TOO THIN DESPITE THE EXCELLENT WORK OF THE MAN ASSIGNED THERE. ONE PERSON WAS NOT ENOUGH. THE AUSTRALIAN SAID THAT THE UNHCR SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO CONTACT NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES RATHER THAN
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REPRESENTATIVES FROM AN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY.

10. AUSTRALIA HAD ACCEPTED 6129 REFUGEES SINCE APRIL 1975. OF THAT TOTAL, 3339 WERE BOAT CASES, 1037 OF WHOM HAD ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA DIRECTLY BY BOAT. THE 1977-78 PROGRAM HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO ACCEPT 2000 INDOCHINESE FROM THAILAND AND NEARBY COUNTRIES. THE AVERAGE MONTHLY RATE WOULD THUS BE 165. BECAUSE OF INITIAL DELAYS IN SELECTION, HOWEVER, THE MONTHLY RATE BETWEEN JANUARY AND JUNE WOULD BE 250. IN ADDITION TO THE REGULAR QUOTA OF 2000, THE TASK FORCE CURRENTLY IN MALAYSIA WILL BE ACCEPTING 1500 BETWEEN DECEMBER 1977 AND THE END OF FEBRUARY 1978. OF THE REFUGEES THAT AUSTRALIA HAD ACCEPTED FROM THAILAND; 60 PERCENT WERE LAO; 20 PERCENT CAMBODIAN; AND 20 PERCENT VIETNAMESE. THOSE FROM MALAYSIA WERE ENTIRELY VIETNAMESE.

11. THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES TOOK THE OCCASION TO DESCRIBE THE NEW PAROLE PROGRAM FOR 7000 BOAT CASE REFUGEES.

12. THE CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE SPOKE OF THE NEW OPEN-ENDED CANADIAN PROGRAM EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1 FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF 50 BOAT CASE FAMILIES A MONTH. A FAMILY COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM AN INDIVIDUAL TO PARENTS PLUS ALL SINGLE CHILDREN UNDER 21. THOSE OVER 21 WOULD BE CONSIDERED A SEPARATE FAMILY. THE CRITERIA WERE CONNECTIONS IN CANADA, LANGUAGE SKILL (ENGLISH

AND FRENCH), AND JOB SKILL.

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13. THE BELGIAN REPRESENTATIVE POINTED OUT THAT
BECAUSE HIS COUNTRY HAD ONE OF THE HIGHEST EMPLOY-
MENT RATES IN EUROPE, IT COULD NOT MAKE LONG TERM
PLEDGES. THERE WERE NEVERTHELESS TWO BELGIAN
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PROGRAMS. BELGIUM HAD ALLOCATED 400 VISAS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION, AND HAD SO FAR ACCEPTED 80 REFUGEES UNDER THAT AUTHORIZATION. IN APRIL 1977, BELGIUM ANNOUNCED A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR 150 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES APART FROM THE FAMILY REUNIFICATION ALLOCATION.

14. THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NETHERLANDS POINTED OUT THAT HIS COUNTRY HAD ALREADY TAKEN 35 REFUGEES FROM MALAYSIA. (HE DID NOT BRING UP THE NETHERLAND'S QUOTA OF 25 FROM THAILAND.)

15. THE NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE SAID THAT HIS COUNTRY HAD NO PROGRAM FOR TAKING MORE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN 1978, BUT WAS PREPARED TO CONSIDER APPLICATIONS FROM CLOSE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF THOSE ALREADY IN NEW ZEALAND. (QUESTIONED AFTER THE MEETING, THE NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE SEEMED CONFUSED ABOUT THE 50 ADDITIONAL CASES THAT EMBASSY WELLINGTON HAD REPORTED ON. HE ADMITTED HE MIGHT NOT HAVE HIS FACTS STRAIGHT.)

16. THE FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE MENTIONED THAT OF THE APPROXIMATELY 12,000 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES THAT FRANCE TAKES IN ANNUALLY, 600 COME FROM MALAYSIA. IN VIEW OF THE GREAT NUMBER OF BOAT CASE ARRIVALS IN MALAYSIA, HOWEVER, THE NUMBER FROM MALAYSIA MIGHT BE INCREASED.

17. THE SWEDISH REPRESENTATIVE SAID THAT HIS COUNTRY PLACED ITS MAIN EMPHASIS ON REFUGEES FROM CHILE AND OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES. IT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN LATIN AMERICA TO BE ABLE TO REACT ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE, AND SAVE THOSE INDIVIDUALS FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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SURE DEATH. HE NEVERTHELESS ADDED THAT THE SWEDES WERE READY TO TAKE INDOCHINESE UNDER CONSIDERATION "IN URGENT AND EXTREMELY DELICATE CASES". HE SAID TO SAMPATKUMAR, "PLEASE DON'T HESITATE" TO CONTACT HIM IN SUCH SITUATIONS.

18. THE AUSTRALIAN, CANADIAN, AND FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES PRIVATELY AND SEPARATELY SPOKE WITH US. THEY SAID THAT GIVEN THE RATE OF BOAT CASE ARRIVALS, THE UNITED STATES, EVEN WITH THE NEW QUOTA OF 7000, WOULD NOT HAVE TO BEAR THE FULL WEIGHT OF ACCEPTING THOSE ON HAND AND THOSE TO COME.

19. COMMENT: WHILE THIS MODEST MEETING SHOULD

NOT BE CONSTRUED AS A FORUM APPROACHING THE LEVEL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE THAT CONGRESSMAN EILBERG HAS PROPOSED, IT SERVES THE PURPOSE OF LOCAL COORDINATION AND A REMINDER TO COUNTRIES OF TRADITIONAL IMMIGRATION THAT THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM NEEDS BROADENED RESPONSE. BARNES SUGGESTS THAT, WITHOUT EXAGGERATING THE PURPOSES, THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER ASKING THE U.S. MISSION IN GENEVA TO SUGGEST TO UNHCR HEADQUARTERS TO DIRECT ITS REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN BANGKOK TO HOLD A SIMILAR GATHERING HERE.

20. FYI: THOUGH THIS EMBASSY IS AWARE THAT THE SWEDISH AMBASSADOR IS PERSONNALLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE REFUGEES, HIS EXPRESSION OF SWEDISH GOVERNMENT POLICY AS RELATED PARA 17, ABOVE, IS DISINGENUOUS, TO SAY THE LEAST. BASED ON SEVERAL REPORTS OF DROWNINGS AND NEAR-DROWNINGS, THE BOAT REFUGEES ARE CLEARLY IN GRAVE DANGER BY ANY OBJECTIVE STANDARD. END FYI.

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